

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET WORKSHOP
JANUARY 25, 2022 MINUTES**

The Board of Selectmen held a Budget Workshop on January 25, 2022 with First Selectman Pam Sawyer presiding. Also in attendance were Selectmen: Mike Eremita, Bob DePietro, Adam Teller, Board of Finance Chair Emily A. Bradley, Board of Finance Member Kristin Gourley, Interim Administrative Officer Jim Rupert, Highway Foreman Lance Dimock, and Town Clerk, Elizabeth Waters.

1. Call to Order

Sawyer called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. Discussion on FY23 Budget

Highway:

Lance Dimock spoke regarding the Highway budget, and stated budget doesn't increase that much. Salt, repairs up 15% price-wise, labor up 2.5 – 2.75%, fuel up 40-50%, buying on floating market due to unknown with schools – last year had to pay penalty because busses weren't running.

Eremita asked if we ever used buying co-ops for fuel, HGC or Sourcewell – they have a fuel division?

Dimock stated he has not heard of them; that we normally we buy thru CRCOG.

Eremita stated there is time between now and the time we purchase, and that it might be worthwhile to check into it. There is a 25% discount on CET purchase, and it might be worthwhile to examine it especially since they have a fuel division.

Dimock stated our quantities are in for CROC as of 2 days ago, as this is time of year we do it. Doesn't know enough about CROCG or other companies to know if whether backing out is appropriate or not. Will be decided probably in a couple of weeks

Rupert stated Lance and Gary are working on it with the BOE and John Butrymovich. Rupert can make some phone calls for a good comparative moving forward, and we can ask if that goes for salt, as well.

Dimock stated salt is different. It a state DOT bid; the State shut down New London and now there is only 1 supplier in whole state.

Teller asked if we are using more sand and salt, or is what we are using has just gone up in price, and stated it has doubled since 2 years ago.

Dimock stated prices are steady and usage has to do with amount of storms and conditions, and temperatures make a difference; we use straight salt with no chemical additives due to damages to wells and vehicles, etc.; but are not using more per mile in a storm.

Rupert stated it is difficult to budget. Historically, the Town budgeted for a little stronger than average to ensure we there was enough in the budget.

Dimock stated historically, we would budget for 800 tons, and tries to budget for 1000 tons for heavy years. Last year, it was 500 tons, and the year before was under 400 (buying minimum) – it varies.

Eremita asks if it is locked in when budgeting for 1000 tons.

Dimock stated you only list your intended use, and that means you have to take half of that. If you don't use the half, they may forgive it, or you buy out at percentage price.

Eremita asked if we are able to stockpile?

Dimock stated the storage shed starts full, and ends full both ends of the year. It is required that we hold half of our intended use. Our storage shed holds 200 tons, we stuff it with 240-250 tons. We really need twice the storage - which is what the state requires - twice of what we have now. All towns are supposed to.

Teller asks Rupert if the OT budget is 15% of regular payroll and how does it compare to other towns and what drives OT?

Rupert stated it is for mostly storms - some of which winter, others are hurricanes, tropical storms, call-outs for random downed trees, state police requests for barricades, and it is uncertain how that compares to other town but can reach out to partner towns and ask.

Dimock stated they set that figure years ago. They had gone over a couple of winters, a couple of fiscal years but mostly that is one that usually sends money back. You just never know what it's going to be until you get through winter.

Teller asks if it impact pension calculations?

Dimock stated that no, pension is on base pay only.

Eremita asks if vacation is allowed in winter and how that impacts OT in winter?

Dimock stated it is allowed and that we have a couple of CDL drivers in Parks and one will move over if needed. Covid impacted them this year and both departments are a little short but we usually move someone over for a storm and that's the way it is normally handled. They always had a couple thousand cushion in part time, in case someone needed to be hired.

Rupert reiterated it is just for part time assistance.

Dimock stated they haven't used it, and Josh took it out a year ago. However, Covid could affect the entire staff and that is not a lot of money - it might cover one storm.

Eremita stated that would have to transfer money

Dimock stated there are no drivers. The State can't get drivers, it is not simple.

Sawyer asks about the tree trimming number \$50k to \$75k.

Dimock stated they haven't done much selective cutting. 95% is emerald ash borer and gypsy moth. He has a truck one week per month, sometimes 2 per month just under \$1000 per day.

Eremita asked how many trees are expected to be taken down in the next year.

Dimock stated thousands need to come down. Emerald ash borer hasn't infected the whole town yet, but there is a large infection of gypsy moth. On Lyman Rd alone, \$10-15 k was spent, and the power company spent double or triple that.

Sawyer asked if the town works hand in hand with power company?

Dimock state he does, with an estimator. They're out of this town completely now, and they have 20-30 trees marked for us to take down. They handle side of road with wires, and the town handles side of road with no wires

Sawyer asked if we hire tree people?

Dimock stated \$75,000 gets 75 days with a tree truck from Asplundh off of the state bid. It is not a town crew – the town can't do elevated trimming as we don't have a bucket truck. The town used to use a loader but OSHA put a stop to that 8 -10 years ago

Sawyer asked to address catch basin cleaning.

Dimock stated next year will be very tight, as there is not enough money in there. There are 850 catch basins, and they normally clean half plus all those that drain into lake. That price for this year went from \$22 to \$25 a basin – right at 15% again. And there is only 1 bidder this year; others aren't doing it anymore.

Sawyer asked to go back to tree trimming and if there are any grants from the power company?

Dimock stated none that he knew of but that he had gotten some from them if their budget - if they do work and do x # of miles, and they're low, we can use their leftover money.

DePietro confirms that Dimock works on the basins himself.

Dimock confirms he does rebuilding and repair, but the basin cleaning is a vacuum truck that cleans and hauls the debris away. The # of basins is down because we're using a lot less sand. Half of the streets are done one year, half the next year. They also spend a day or two checking because if construction is going on, some may get full.

DePietro asked if we had a lot of FT staff in the highway dept., we would have less OT?

Dimock stated that no - we can handle the vehicles we have, and that OT would be after-hours for storm coverage.

Rupert stated the department is staffed 8 hours a day, 5 days a week and OT covers what happens outside of those hours and on weekends, and that Dimock and John Butrymovich are good about sharing staff if they are short staffed.

Town Clerk

Waters stated the budget is straightforward with the usual increases for payroll through union contracts, and other contracts, and a little is budgeted for the codification project. There is one increase in one program for dog licensing. The codification is for the Town Ordinances, Zoning Regulations and Charter. The company we are using is General Code and it started a couple years ago. They have done a lot of work as far as reviewing with their attorneys and put it into a structured form – we will have some of it in books in the office, and part will be online which will make it easier to search for things approved and added throughout the years. They will also ensure the ordinances don't conflict with anything in the charter and/or state statutes. Patrice is working on the zoning regulations which is not completely finished but once that is done, then the rest will be done. The process of review is taking some time. There are 2 last payments left - \$1978 - and that is floating back and forth in/out of budget. Not sure if final process will be done by June, and it may go into next fiscal year – so we need that money there.

DePietro mentions a typo of "personnel."

Rupert stated the unaudited actual expenses for Professional & Education services - only \$245 was spent in the 2021 fiscal year but \$1700 was budgeted in the upcoming fiscal year – it was a direct result of COVID – they couldn't go to many venues or training. That funding is flat request in hopes they'll be able to return to classes and meetings.

Eremita asked if we can prepay that last payment on the contract so it's not looming next year if we have it in budget?

Water stated she can look into that and will ask Claudia at General Code.

Sawyer asked about any preservation projects?

Waters stated right now they are still in the Historic Preservation grant and the next cycle starts in April - \$5,500 for that next grant cycle. This year's grant is expensed for minute's books, imaging, and labeling books (year, title/commission). Another part was used for cabinetry for extra space in the vault, but they had issues with the cabinet doors and supply chain issues, and hopefully will be finished by June. For next year's grant, there is some stuff they may do with vital records and index books that need permanent labels – currently they have stick-on labels that are peeling.

DePietro stated the Temporary Building Committee is moving quickly and if the town hall moves forward, we have to be prepared for storage, moving, records, etc.

Waters stated if a new town hall goes forth, we will have to talk with the CT State library regarding construction of the vault, as that is under their jurisdiction and they have very strict regulations about that. Regarding the Education budget – COVID caused issues and things came to a halt. We are the hosting county so we are preparing for the fall. We will just do normal county meetings which comes out of that budget. Will have meetings pretty much every month because we are the hosting county.

Other:

Thursday night:

Sending agenda tomorrow, adding Recreation Dept [Stephanie Crane] budget. Eremita has another meeting scheduled that evening but will try to do both, and further states the Grant that was voted on last week went out on time.

Sawyer: Meeting Adjourned 7:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Palazzini

Danielle Palazzini
Land Use Secretary

PLEASE SEE THE MINUTES OF SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS FOR THE APPROVAL OF THESE MINUTES AND ANY CORRECTIONS HERETO